

In the claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A payment system, the payment system comprising a plurality of purchasing unit means in electronic form, which can be issued and have a predetermined value ~~or values~~, activating means operable when a purchasing unit means is electronically issued, means for checking the activating means to establish whether a purchasing unit means has been issued, and means for canceling part or all of the issuance when part or all of the purchasing unit means is spent.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Currently Amended) A system according to claim 1 2, wherein the purchasing unit means are such that a purchaser can print the purchasing unit means.

4. (Cancelled)

5. (Cancelled)

6. (Original) A system according to claim 1, wherein the purchasing unit means includes a visually readable unique identification.

7. (Original) A system according to claim 1, wherein the purchasing unit means comprises a machine readable unique identification.

8. (Original) A system according to claim 7, wherein the machine readable identification is in the form of a magnetic strip, barcode, 'glif', intelligent or optical character recognition.

9. (Original) A system according to claim 1, wherein purchasing unit means with different predetermined values are provided.

10. (Original) A system according to claim 1, wherein means are provided to permit a purchaser of a purchasing unit means to allocate a unique security code to the purchasing unit means, which security code is required to be given to enable the purchasing unit means to be spent.

11. (Cancelled)

12. (Original) A system according to claim 1, wherein the activating means comprises an accessible database which records the unique identifications of the purchasing unit means and an indication as to whether the purchasing unit means have been issued and whether the issuance has yet been cancelled.

13. (Original) A system according to claim 1, wherein the activating means comprises a plurality of discrete vending stations where purchasing unit means can be purchased

or otherwise distributed, and simultaneously issued, with a signal being sent to the database that the particular purchasing unit means has been issued.

Q' 14. (Currently Amended) A system according to claim 12, wherein the canceling means comprises a plurality of discrete purchasing stations where the identification of purchasing unit means can be read or inputted, and a signal sent to the database to cancel part or all of the value of the purchasing unit means ~~issuance of the purchasing members~~.

15. (Original) A system according to claim 1, wherein means are provided to permit the uncanceled values of two or more purchasing unit means to be combined on a fresh purchasing unit means.

16. (Original) Apparatus usable in a purchasing system according to claim 1.

17. (Original) A purchasing unit means usable with a system according to claim 1.

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